

## *And There Was Life in the Valley*

Winter in the mountains and valleys of Deseret was a test of faith and stamina for the pioneer Saints. Snows and bitter blowing winds came early and lasted long. In the high valleys of the Wasatch the frosts were heavy in September and snows were on the ground in October. Spring sunshine rarely melted the earth's snow crust until late March or April, leaving only about five summer months to prepare for cold, ice and snow all over again.

Anxieties about the weather were sharply accentuated for some 11 pioneer families in Utah Valley during the winter of 1858-59, for they were making plans to move into new homes high in the Wasatch mountains when Spring came.

The road through Provo Canyon had been finished before the snows fell and a bridge spanned the Provo River. With the decision made to move into the valley, they spent the short days and long, crisp winter nights in building furniture and making clothes. Plows had to be sharpened and harrows made ready for the sagebrush and soil of the new country. Wagons had to be repaired and those who lacked teams had to acquire them.

William Meeks was appointed leader of the group and they met frequently under his direction to ask the Lord to bless them in their preparations. Their constant prayer was that the elements would be tempered so they could mature crops and sustain themselves and their families in the new country.

Spring came late in 1859 and it was the last day of April before the group of 11 men with their three wagons and teams of oxen could leave Provo.

Families of the men had agreed to remain behind in Provo until log cabins could be built and other preparations made for their coming. Tearfully, the wives and children stood by that April morning as they watched their husbands and fathers start out toward Provo Canyon and a new life.

Facing the uncertainties of the venture were Thomas Rasband, John Cook, Charles N. Carroll, John Carlile, John Jordan, Henry Chatwin, Jesse Bond, James Carlile, William Giles Jr., William Carpenter and George Carlile.

Winter and the forces of nature had played havoc with the road in many places and traveling was slow. In addition, several snowslides blocked the route, making the journey hazardous as well as exhausting.



Dirt floors, dirt roofs and mud packed between the logs were the order of the day.

When the crops were planted and the log huts prepared, the men left the valley and went back to Provo where happy families greeted them with shouts of "How's the weather?" and "When are we going?"

With wives, children, cows, pigs, chickens and all their earthly possessions packed, the original company started out and were joined by others who were cheered by the reports of a good summer and plenty of farming land and irrigation water. Some of the additional families who came were Thomas H. Giles, John Giles, Hiram Oaks and George Carlile.

During that first summer, some 1,000 bushels of grain were raised in the valley. Though some of the wheat crop was injured by early frost, it could still be made into flour and the settlers rejoiced for the blessings of the harvest. Because the nearest gristmill was in Provo and a four days' journey away, many of the people ground flour in small hand mills or boiled the wheat and ate it whole with milk.

With the crops in and summer on the wane, dread winter again loomed up before the people. Farming efforts had been to raise wheat and other crops to sustain human life, and so before winter came it was necessary to cut meadow hay and swamp grass for cattle wherever it could be found. All of it had to be cut by hand with a scythe, which proved to be the hardest work of the summer.

Many of the men who had come to the valley during the summer and raised their crops decided that they would return to Provo for the winter rather than provide hay for their cattle and be shut out from the rest of the world for the long winter months.

However, 18 families had cast their lot with Provo Valley and through the winter they stayed. These families, according to the journal of John Crook, were Thomas Rasband, John Crook, Charles N. Carroll, John Jordan, Alexander Sessions, Bradford Sessions, Hiram Oaks, John Lee, Richard Jones, James Davis, William Davidson, James Laird, John Sessions, Elisha Thomas, James Carlile and George Carlile. Jane Clowworthy and Elizabeth Carlile were both widows. Charles C. Thomas, unmarried, lived with his brother Elisha. No record is made of the exact number of women and children.

The first birth among the settlers in the valley occurred in November. The child, a daughter of William Davidson and his wife, Elle, was named Timpanogos, the Indian name for the valley and the prominent mountain that lay at the west.

For those who remained, the first winter in the valley was a long and dreary one. The snow fell early and was several feet deep. For nearly four months they were without communication from the rest of the world.

At Christmas time, however, a group of young people from Provo braved the weather and came through the canyon by sleigh and spent the holiday season with the families in the valley. They soon left and no one else came into the valley until the snows melted.



to the valley. It was small and threshed very slowly, using horses as its source of power. When the grain had been through the machine it still had to be run through a fanning mill to separate the kernels from the chaff. This mill was hand operated and also very slow. As a result, some of the grain did not get harvested before winter set in.

The prospects of winter seemed less bleak that year for there were many more people in the valley and more adequate preparations had been made. To help the time pass more quickly, a dramatics group was organized. Some very good plays were produced with John Crook, James Duke, C. N. Carroll, John Gallagher and John Jordan taking the leads.

The saints also could look forward to regular Church services on Sundays in their new meeting house. A choir was organized to help with the music and John Crook, talented in many lines, served as the choir leader.



JOHN CROOK

Original Settler and Early Historian

Schools were also conducted during the winter months for the education of the people. John M. Young was the first school teacher and the classes were held in the meeting house with students sitting on rough benches or stools using make-shift desks fastened to the walls.

There were other interests in the new valley, too, for the records show that on Christmas Day, 1860, Charles C. Thomas claimed as his bride, Emmaline Sessions. They were married by Thomas Rasband in the first ceremony to be performed in the valley. That evening another couple, Harvey Meeks and a Miss Dougal were married at Center Creek by Silas Smith.

According to John Crook's journal, those who spent the winter of 1860-61 in the fort with their families were:

North Side: John Carlile, John Crook, Thomas Rasband, James Carlile, Fred Giles, Robert S. Duke, Willis Boren, James Davis, Robert Broadhead, Hyrum Oaks, Alfred Johnson, Sam Rooker, William Damaron, James Lamon and John Lee.

East Side: Alex Sessions, Richard Jones, Elisha Thomas, Bradford Sessions, Isaac Cummings, Darwin Walton, John Cummings Sr., Charles Carroll, George Damaron, Bailes Sprouse, Thomas Hicken, George Thompson and Norton Jacobs.

South Side: Thomas Moulton, Patrick Carroll, William Forman, John Muir, John M. Murdock, Thomas Todd, Cal Henry and Robert Carlile.

West Side: Jane Clotworthy, Zemira Palmer, James Duke, James Ford, Cub Johnson, John Davis, Robert Parker, Terry Burns, William McDonald, John Hamilton, George W. Clyde, John Witt, Joseph S. McDonald, John Jordan, a Mr. Russell and John McDonald.

By the time Spring was welcomed in 1861 the community of Heber was recognized by Church leaders in Salt Lake City as being large enough to organize into a ward. Thus, early in 1861 Joseph S. Murdock was ordained as bishop of the new ward by President Brigham Young and sent from American Fork to Heber to take charge of Church affairs. He chose as his counselors John W. Witt and Thomas Rasband. John Hamilton served as ward clerk.

Bishop Murdock also served as presiding bishop of the valley and directed the Church efforts of presiding elders who were called in the small communities that had begun to spring up in the valley. These community developments are discussed separately in later chapters.

The year 1861 proved to be a year of many significant accomplishments. With Church activity on an organized basis and the individual homes as well fixed as possible for that time, the settlers began to look for community improvements.

Provisions were made for old and new settlers to plant vegetable gardens outside the fort. Ephraim Smith and William P. Reynolds built a chopper run by horse power to chop wheat for those who could not go to the mills in Provo. While it was still somewhat crude, the chopper was a great help to those who had been grinding their flour in small hand mills.

Another bridge was built over the Provo River, this one located six miles north of Heber on the road to Salt Lake City. A good wagon road was also made through Provo Canyon, with toll being charged for use of the road.

John M. Murdock organized a cooperative sheep herd in 1860 and tended for the sheep during the summer months himself. He was able to take the sheep far enough south to winter out so that they did not need special supplies of hay. This method of caring for the sheep enabled

## FIRST WASATCH COUNTY STAKE PRESIDENCY



President Abram Hatch

Thomas H. Giles  
First CounselorHenry S. Alexander  
Second Counselor

County. The wards at that time were Heber East, Heber West, Midway, Wallburg, Charleston, Buysville, Upper Daniels, Center Lake Creek, Francis, Benchcreek, Elkhorn, Riverdale and Woodland. In Uintah County there were Ashley Center, Mill District, Ashley Fork and Merrill Wards.

Some of the stake officers appointed at the time of stake organization were Thomas Todd, president of the Elders Quorum with Orson Hicken and Henry Ohlweiler as counselors. John M. Murdock was named president of the High Priests Quorum with John Jordan and Charles N. Carroll as counselors. Thomas Rasband was appointed to preside over the priests, Thomas Hicken Sr. to preside over teachers and J. Heber Moulton over the deacons. William Forman was named to act as the agent for the Presiding Bishop of the Church. Emma Brown



white top wagons firing guns and waving a large banner "Theatre Tonight." Needless to say, the stunts usually drew a full house.

By 1873 the community badly needed the theatre building that had been started in 1862, and so efforts began anew to complete the building. However, a more central location was felt desirable, and so a site was secured near 145 North Main. The two stone walls that had previously been built were torn down and the materials used in the foundation of the new building. Work was finished in time for the winter season, and proceeds from five plays produced early in 1874 helped to defray costs of the building and some new scenery. The new building became known as the Heber Social Hall, and later was called the Old Hall.

Directing the new theatrical work in the Social Hall was a reorganized committee consisting of James Duke, president; John Crook, vice president; Charles N. Carroll, secretary; William H. Walker, musical director and Patrick Carroll, stage carpenter.

On January 13, 1874, the group produced "The Charcoal Burner," and "Bombastus Furico." January 27 the fare included "The Mistletoe Bough," and "Deaf as a Post." Produced on February 10 were "A Roland for an Oliver," and "The Toodies." Finally on March 10 they staged "The Rent Day," and "The Omnibus."

Some of the performers in these productions included James and John Duke, Charles N., Willard and Lottie Carroll, Sarah Murdoch, John Jordan, Thomas Hicken Jr., Joseph Cluff, William and Robert Lindsay, Annie R. Duke, Elizabeth Moulton Hicken, Emma Carter, Alexander Fortie, John Gallagher and Bessie Jordan.

Dramatic efforts in Heber were spearheaded by the Dramatic Association until October of 1884 when the group was dissolved and a new organization known as the Heber Dramatic Combination was formed. John Crook, Ira N. Jacobs, Alex Fortie, Henry Clegg, and John W. Crook were officers of the group, which continued to use the old Social Hall for theatrical performances. A number of traveling companies passed through Heber during these years and made use of the theatre for performances. Fees at first were \$6 for use of the hall and scenery, and later this was reduced to \$5.

Because Heber audiences had taken advantage of dramatic and cultural events through the years the community became well known for appearances by traveling companies. Agents sought bookings in Heber because they knew the performances would be well received. Some of the more frequently appearing groups included the Courtney Morgan plays, the Moore-Ether Theatrical Company, the Great La Reno and the Ellison-White Chautauqua group who included Heber on their international circuit for many years.

One of the first projects of the officers of the new Combination was to add important new pieces of scenery to the Hall, including several scenes painted by W. C. Morris of Salt Lake City.



Local dramatic group who performed the play, *Uncle Josh*, in 1912. Seated back row, left to right, DeVera Smith, O. A. Whitaker, F. Clayton Montgomery, James Johnson, E. Parley Cliff, Charles Bronson. Front row, Loretta Neff, William Harvey, Charles DeGraff and Charles Broadbent.

Davidson, Sarah Cummings, Richard Smith, Emma Carlisle, Mr. and Mrs. John Gallagher, Golda Johnson, John Jordan, C. N. Carroll, Amanda Smith, Joseph Cluff and the Lindsay boys, Robert and William.

By the early 1900's the schools of Heber, particularly the high school, had begun dramatic productions and there was no longer the need for separate community productions. Dramatic work at Wasatch High School has always been of the highest caliber and many students have learned a deep love for the theatre through their participation in school productions.

One of the more outstanding dramatic endeavors outside the schools was a group of three "esthetic entertainers" who called themselves the "Theatrosos." The three, Orson Ryan, Pearl Buys and Theodore Benjamin Miller, appeared in reading recitals throughout the valley. A 1908 handbill advertised them as a group offering impersonations, character sketches, imitations and sparkling dialogue with touches of sunshine, pathos, laughter, shadow, joy, tears and gems from popular and classic drama.

Particularly noteworthy in their contributions to drama in the community are Charles DeGraff, who has done much through the MIA drama program, and Loreta Neff who has been a popular dramatic director in the area.